

Top 6 Temples to Visit in South India

Southern India is a heavenly abode of magnificent monuments, standing majestically for ages. The architecture of these monuments is breathtakingly beautiful and grand. From Dravidian architecture to Vijayanagara style of architecture, from elaborate pillars of Chalukyas to minute stone carvings by Krishnadevaraya, each monument has a different tale to tell. From tall, intricately carved gopurams to majestic pillars and life-sized shrines, these beautiful temples in South India are rich in legend and stunning in their grandeur.

1. Virupaksha Temple, Hampi

The one with many builders situated on the banks of the beautiful river, Tungabhadra, Virupaksha temple is a magnificent marvel of the Vijayanagara Empire. Dedicated to Lord Shiva (Virupaksha), the temple is extensively famous for its tall gopuram, grand architecture, and intricate carvings. The temple, built in the 7th century underwent a lot of additions by various rulers who ruled the kingdom, to display their power. The central pillared hall, Ranga Mandapa, is the most ornate addition by Raja Krishnadevaraya. Virupaksha temple is a center of marriages as well as the festivities of Virupaksha-Pampa in December. This South Indian Temple is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

2. Meenakshi Temple, Madurai

The one which is a new wonder

Located on the southern banks of river Vaigai, Meenakshi Temple is dedicated to Parvati and her consort, Lord Shiva. Also called Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple, this architectural marvel is a throbbing center of culture and art.

The present structure, built between 1623 and 1655 CE, was on the list of top 30 nominees for the “New Seven Wonders of the World.” The halls, gopurams, and the shrines of the temple are ornate and grand in their appearance. Two very distinct features in terms of iconography are the shrine of Meenakshi holding a parrot and the right raised leg of Nataraja.

3. Venkateswara Temple, Tirupati

A South Indian temple which is a study in opulence

Situated in the hill town of Tirumala in Andhra Pradesh, Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple is one of the most famous and majestic temples in South India. The temple is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and is also known as Tirupati Balaji temple. The construction of the temple is believed to have started in 300 AD.

Very interestingly, Tirupati Balaji temple is one of the richest temples in the world, in terms of the donations received by the devotees. The temple has a rich history and a splendid Dravidian style of architecture.

4. Ramanathaswamy Temple, Rameswaram

The one which is a Jyotirlinga

Located on Rameswaram island in Tamil Nadu, Ramanathaswamy Temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva. The temple is also one of the twelve sacred Jyotirlinga temples of the country.

The legend narrates the tale of Lord Rama who is believed to have prayed to Lord Shiva here. The temple has one of the longest and most ornate corridors among other temples in South India. Rameswaram is also one of the char dhams for pilgrimage.

5. Aihole and Pattadakal

The one from the 5th century

These capital cities of Chalukyas are exclusively famous for their beautiful temples in Karnataka. These South Indian temples date back to the 5th century CE, very elaborate in their architecture and grandeur. Aihole is also called the “cradle of Hindu Rock Architecture”.

Famous temples of Aihole include Durga Temple and Lad Khan Temple. Pattadakal follows the blend of Nagara and Dravidian style. Important temples include Sangameshwara Temple, Mallikarjuna Temple, Jagannath Temple, Jain Temple etc.

6. Airavatesvara Temple, Kumbakonam

The one about an elephant

Located in the town of Darasuram near Kumbakonam, Airavatesvara Temple is another **awe-striking** example built in **the** Dravidian architecture. A UNESCO World Heritage site, this temple was built in the 12th century CE.

Dedicated to Lord Shiva, the temple traces its name from Airavata, the white elephant of Indra who worshiped Lord Shiva in this temple. The temple is exclusively famous for its exquisite stone carvings.

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